

## Ovation for CELIA FREMLIN

Her novel  
*'THE SPIDER ORCHID'*  
won the following praise  
from H. R. F. Keating in a  
day-of-publication review:

**"A particular brand of acuteness & intelligence, feminine and splendidly stimulating... a plot of clap-hands ingenuity. To the very last paragraph we're kept tenterhooked. Inner observation pushes this book to a high, high place"**

—The Times

GOLLANCZ

## LE CARRE

His new novel  
of espionage  
is published on  
September 8th

Hodder & Stoughton

# From Open Lineage to Closed Domesticated

The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800. By Lawrence Stone. (Weidenfeld, £16.)

TO generalise about human behaviour is always difficult because whatever examples are given in one direction are apt to drop up apparently proving the opposite. It is one of the merits of Lawrence Stone's long, carefully researched, interesting, if at times rather repetitive, book that he makes this clear from the start.

Mr Stone recognises that the definition must to some extent overlap, divides his types of family into three main periods: the Open Lineage Family, running from the Middle Ages until about 1550; the Restricted Patriarchal Nuclear Family, predominating from about 1550 to 1640, but continuing to at least 1700; the Closed Domesticated Nuclear Family, which evolved in the late 17th century and was typical of the 18th century. It should be explained that "nuclear" here refers to the basic family, parents and children only.

Until the first few decades of the 16th century marriage was, in the upper ranks, an arranged matter that tied together two kinship groups. Children, emotionally speaking, were not much more than neighbours or associated members of the household. At a lower level arrangements were equally matter-of-fact. With a death rate among children of 30-50 per cent too much affection could not be invested in them. This, at least, is the picture to be gained from such documentation as exists. One cannot doubt exceptions were to be found.

The second type of family (Restricted Patriarchal Nuclear) saw the decline of loyalties to lineage, patron, local community, in favour of the nation, though domestic patriarchy in general remained. This last came under attack from the 17th-century religious sects, and the arranged marriage began to be thought of as a source of adultery.

The third type (Closed Domesticated), varying like the others, of course, in social strata while retaining many patriarchal attitudes, greatly increased personal ties and took the impact of the Romantic Revival. By about 1780 there was a rise in "permissiveness," which the next century (notwithstanding all sorts of exceptions) was to see checked.

Mr Stone shows that historical evidence appears to contradict Engels's theory that the rise of capitalism lowered the status of women. Engels also argued that industrialisation brought the love marriage to the working classes. But Mr Stone points out that, on the contrary, the individualistic ideology that first changed family relationships began in the landed, professional and

By Anthony Powell

upper bourgeois class — and well before industrialisation.

One of the least known aspects of English marriage to which Mr Stone draws attention is its altogether anomalous state until the Hardywidge Marriage Act of 1753. There are probably many historical researchers into such matters who are unaware of the facts. It was not until the 13th century that the Church managed to take over control of the marriage law, and to assert, at least in principle, the monogamous indissoluble marriage. However, the prohibited degrees were so widely drawn that the powerful (in a closely related society) were usually able to obtain a divorce on the grounds of too close a family connection.

By the 16th century the position was fairly well defined for the well-to-do: financial contract; formal exchange before witnesses; banns (by the 17th century evaded by licence); wedding in church; consummation. But the point cannot be too much emphasised that, in ecclesiastical law, the exchange of promises before witnesses followed by cohabitation, was legally binding.

In Wales and the Borders especially, "handfasting" continued to be followed by the poor. The church wedding was not elevated to a sacrament until 1459, and only in 1563, after the Reformation, did the Roman Catholic Church first require the presence of a priest for the ceremony to be binding.

The Anglican Church did not recognise this innovation, therefore much confusion existed. The future promise was only binding if followed by consummation, but "I do take thee to my wife" and "I do take thee to my husband" were an irrevocable commitment. This can explain many undocumented

marriages, especially those of Dissenters. Nevertheless, the most disreputable priest would often be sought, because the civil courts, which controlled property, only recognised a church wedding.

Mr Stone has much to say about sex as well as marriage, a subject that is usually anyone's guess. He investigates this matter through extracts from diaries (and some lively illustrations), while agreeing that diary-keepers who describe their own goings on are of necessity exceptional people. My own feeling is that there was always a good deal of sex about at all periods.

In a generally absorbing study one must demur at "crying" for "affectionate" the "Pagan Regiment of Women" was the rule of women; not John Aubrey. Surely, to place the Cerne Abbas Giant as 18th-century is wildly improbable. "Pagan Celtic Britain" (Ross, 1967). One should, at the same time register appreciation of the name being recorded of Climacteric Smith—born in his father's 70th year.



Chang Seng-yu's interpretation of the Planet Saturn, a section of a 6th-century handscroll portraying "The Five Planets and Twenty-Eight Constellations" from "Chinese Painting" (Macmillan, £9) by James Cahill.

# Ireland's Joan of Arc

By Catherine Dupré

Maud Gonne: a Biography of Yeats' Beloved. By Samuel Levenson. (Cassell, £6.95.)

FACTS, like naughty children, should be seen and not heard, and facts can be the bane of the biographer. Lists of dates and events make large parts of Samuel Levenson's biography of Maud Gonne read like an extended engagement diary.

These unruly children have done much to spoil what should have been an interesting life. Fortunately Mr Levenson becomes a better nursemaid as his book proceeds, and the latter part is much less bedevilled by events, though at no point does he throw them out of the nursery to leave him in peace to state his case for Maud Gonne.

Maud Gonne will always be remembered as the woman whom Yeats loved so devotedly, and who inspired much of his greatest poetry. But she saw herself as the Joan of Arc of Ireland, and, as her son-in-law wrote of her, "having failed in her relationship to her three men [she] found in nationalism a passion an emotion to fill the void." This is a negative way of stating the truth that Maud was frigid about men and passionate about Ireland.

Born in Aldershot in 1865, the

daughter of a British Army officer, Capt. Thomas Gonne, it was chance that brought Ireland and Maud together. Riding in the Irish countryside with her father she happened to witness the brutal eviction of peasants from their cottages, and vowed that she would devote her life to "change all that."

Little is known of her first liaison with a Frenchman, Lucien Malet, a married man 15 years her senior. The relationship lasted 12 years, and he was the unacknowledged father of her daughter, Iselt. Her marriage to the nationalist hero, John MacBride, ended after a year in divorce. Though when he was shot for his part in the Easter Rising of 1916, she was proud that he was the father of her son, Sean.

Into this scene, peppered with dates of nationalist meetings, Yeats comes as a breath of fresh air, or perhaps one should say supernatural air, for the strongest bond between Maud and the poet was their interest in the occult. "If only we could make contact with the hidden forces of the land it would give us strength for the freeing of Ireland," she wrote.

And Yeats rowed to an island on Lough Key, where

he imagined his "Castle of Heroes" to be a possible focal point for a Celtic revival. Both he and Maud seem to have possessed psychic powers, and his last words to her, not long before his death, were "we should have gone on with our Castle of Heroes."

Their relationship had a brief spiritual consummation in 1906, 20 years after their first meeting. "I thought I would go to you, actually," Maud wrote to Yeats. "You had taken the form of a great serpent." If it were not for the inspiration that Yeats derived from this strange correspondence, it would be hard to see it as totally absurd. At last Yeats abandoned his hopes of marrying Maud and looked elsewhere, first to her daughter, Iselt, and then to the woman who became his wife, George Hyde-Lees.

"I held my breath in adoration. Tall she was and exquisitely formed... Maud Gonne, the woman who had been the first person to contain in his biography. He was not the first person to be haunted by an oversized personality, and indeed, stature.

## Doing justice to Star Chamber

By Ivan Roots

The Cardinal's Court: the Impact of Thomas Wolsey in Star Chamber. By J. A. Guy. (Harvester, £8.50.)

NEITHER Thomas Wolsey nor Star Chamber stands high in popular esteem. The one epitomises clerical ambition and corruption, the other is the symbol of summary and ruthless injustice.

Students of Tudor history have long been aware that the truth is not so simple, and have suspected that Wolsey's use of the court—of which the Cardinal was, if not the only begetter, certainly a conscious developer—would show them both in a rather favourable light.

Of course, Wolsey was out for himself but he was not indifferent either to the interests of the king he served or to those of the commonwealth of which that king was assumed to be protector. His deployment of the comparatively swift and flexible procedures of conciliar justice was positive and efficient. Public order was always threatened by self-centred lay magnates who were likely to be overmighty subjects and oppressors. To reduce them to some sort of social discipline demanded that "the equal and indifferent administration of justice" must be given priority, if only for policy.

The Tudor monarchs, given few resources of funds, information, military power and communications had to rely on local men to work for them. Star Chamber, lodged at the centre of things, was potentially a weapon to cut through the "misdemeanours, enormities, injuries and wrongs" which abounded even among the very men who were

charged provincially with reducing them.

J. A. Guy's specialist study—fruit of a doctoral thesis—establishes that Wolsey's work in Star Chamber was socially desirable. Because it was so the court survived his downfall and gave his successor, as Chancellor, Sir Thomas More, an opportunity to demonstrate his concern for ordered humanity. Wolsey's proteges, Thomas Cromwell, too, was able to employ it for that administrative efficiency and responsiveness to "the public demand for justice" upon which his much-enhanced reputation now rests.

Under the later Tudors Star Chamber grew in estimation. William Lambarde surveying the organs of justice in Elizabethan England was dazzled by its "bright rays" of justice. When he and Sir Thomas Smith testified to its social value they were in fact praising Thomas Wolsey. It was only in the last couple of decades before the Long Parliament met in 1649 that its name was blackened and then mostly among the well-to-do who objected to its interference in cases of "mine" and "thine."

The incontinent abolition of 1641 was something of a mixed blessing. But it is probably too late now to rehabilitate Star Chamber in popular history or to give the Cardinal-Chancellor his due. Serious students of the period, however, are bound to welcome the combination of fresh insights with the confirmation of changed views offered by Dr Guy's carefully documented monograph.

## Lines on the manor

By Cassandra Jardine

The Country House in English Renaissance Poetry. By William A. McClung. (University of California Press, £7.50.)

THE poems by Ben Jonson and his followers dedicated to praising the Tudor tradition of the manorial estate are few in number and were written over a fairly brief timespan, for such a faith that the good life can be achieved in a visible institution seldom is thought possible.

Despite the strong classical precedents which William McClung diligently uncovers in "The Country House in English Renaissance Poetry," these poems are not mere genre pieces but comments on the social changes that the poets could see taking place. They espouse the cause of the old hierarchical order in which largesse, favour, relationships were founded on interdependence and not economic exploitation, and nature, to show her approval, gave freely of her bounty.

Because value is very rarely recognised except in the face of imminent loss, the poets

were goaded into defence by the growing threat of the mercantile aristocrats setting into large estates owned by grandiose buildings.

For the poets the material differences between the old and the new country house provided an obvious point of departure for more probing contrasts; for the critic they are a red herring. The architectural details—barrings those that the poets select as evidence of significant changes in emphasis (such as the increasing unimportance of the hall)—are as relevant to the poems' meaning as a street plan to Utopia.

In many ways Mr McClung confirms what the poets were inveighing against: his book is scholarly, every source and echo exactly researched and carefully balanced in the attention it gives to the poetry and to the architecture, yet somehow it lacks any feeling for, or illumination of the imagination at work leaving the reader informed but cold.

## Sculpture unveiled

Sculpture: Processes and Principles. By Rudolf Wittkower. (Allen Lane, £8.50.)

COMPARED with other nations the British have remained, if not actually hostile to sculpture, antipathetic and curiously insensitive to it.

Not since the Middle Ages has it played any central part in their tradition, and the debilitating mediocrity of all but a few of London's monuments and statues bears witness as much to the lack of intelligent patronage as to the standards of British sculptors.

If this view is accepted, the antidote to it is provided by Rudolf Wittkower's *Sculpture: Processes and Principles*—a thought-provoking, most reasonably priced and extensively illustrated work of a very high quality.

Here is the perfect book for those who find sculpture difficult.

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GOLLANCZ

## The great debate in Scotland

By Patrick Morrah

Scotland and the Union. By  
David Daiches. (Murray,  
£5.50.)

"BUT above all, my Lord," said Lord Belhaven, addressing the Scottish Parliament on Nov. 1, 1706, "I think I see our Ancient Mother CALEDONIA, like Caesar sitting in the midst of our Senate, Rufully looking round about her, Covering herself with her Royal Garment, attending the Fatal Blow, and breathing out her last with a Et tu quoque mi fili."

Such was the voice of Scottish Nationalism on the eve of the passing of the Act of Union in 1707. Its echo has reverberated through the past two centuries and three-quarters, and is heard in undiminished volume in the current controversy on devolution.

All the arguments advanced today were thrashed out in the Great Debate of 270 years ago, even though the main issues may have been different. Scotland's share of Britain's international trade was the fundamental point to be decided, but the most emotive question was Jacobitism. The Scots before the Act of Union clung to their right to select their own successor to Queen Anne.

The Government at Westminster could never agree to this, for apart from the separation of the two kingdoms under different monarchs a Jacobite succession in Scotland would facilitate a French invasion through the northern back door. This particular danger was lessened in the early years of Anne's reign through Marlborough's victories.

In tracing the story of the relations between the two countries David Daiches, in *'Scotland and the Union'*, finds it necessary to cover the whole history of the northern kingdom.

For the benefit, presumably, of ignorant Sassenachs, he recounts the story of the Scottish kingdom from the earliest times before embarking on his main narrative, and a later section brings the record up to date, linking the controversies of 1702-1707 with the discussions of the present day.

Scotland's last Parliament produced great oratory and considerable statesmanship as well as passionate partisanship. Prof. Daiches threads his way through the debates with the skill and grasp of detail which we have come to expect from him when he is writing about his native land.

## Ditherings of a war Cabinet

By Max Beloff

Inside Asquith's Cabinet: from the Diaries of Charles Hobhouse. Edited by Edward David. (Murray, £6.25.)

THE pattern of political history is largely imposed upon us from the top; it is found in the leading figures—the Asquiths, the Greys, the Lloyd Georges, the Churchills—who write their apologies and whose papers form the core of biographies.

Yet the immediacy of events may be better conveyed by those just close enough to the centre to know some of what was going on, but without the need for self-justification which affects the leaders. Charles Hobhouse was a minor cog in the old Liberal party: junior posts at the India Office and the Treasury, the Chancellorship of the Duchy, and the Post Office—ending as one of the Liberals sacrificed to make the first coalition.

But his diaries, which reveal both the solidity of his old-fashioned convictions and an eye for characters who did not share them, are a useful source for the period, and as here reduced to a third of their length and skillfully (if not impeccably) edited by Edward David, also provide good reading.

The earlier pre-Cabinet diaries are primarily atmospheric.

spheric in their interest: one can be both sorry for a minister who being both an anti-suffragist and a sufferer from hay-fever so badly that he could not fight a county seat in June, should have had sent to him by suffragettes letters containing grass-seed and pepper.

Hobhouse was more impressive as an inquirer into Indian government, and the record of his Indian travels in 1907-8 is interesting both because of his unmythical views of the Indian Civil Service and because of the pessimism about the duration of the Raj that he found among its members.

Even before he entered the Cabinet, Hobhouse formed very clear pictures of its principal members from his dealings with them. Neither Churchill nor Lloyd George commanded his admiration; Churchill indeed aroused feelings of irritation and at times contempt. "A point child endowed by chance with the brain of a genius."

Lloyd George was harder to place; Hobhouse was emphatic about his lack of working method and of principled spending money, if this could be avoided, was for a Gladstonian like Hobhouse, the worst form of moral turpitude. He quoted with relief John Burn's comment: "L.G.'s conduct is as good as new; for he has never tried."

On the other hand, he became after the outbreak of war somewhat more appreciative of Lloyd George's positive qualities: "L.G. is in council as in every other relation wonderfully versatile, adroit and quick, with an unvarnished and indeed miraculous power of picking other people's brains. And one can see in the diary the evidence for the growing ascendancy of Lloyd George for whom (despite his self-indulgence) Hobhouse's feelings were much warmer."

But what is most useful in the wartime diaries is the impression they give of total uncertainty about how long the conflict might go on, what measures, at home and abroad, might need to be taken to handle it, how unco-ordinated were policies with the Allies, and how far the cabinet was from acting as a coherent whole. The editor rightly points out that while the rumours of anti-Asquith intrigues set down in good faith by Hobhouse were often no more than rumours, the atmosphere was from almost the beginning one which presaged collapse.

While there was a division in temperament between those for whom the war should not mean any compromise with Liberal principles and others prepared to sacrifice these principles in the pursuit of victory required it, there was no hard and fast division on issues. Mr David believes the diaries bear out the view that coalition was seen by Asquith as the only way of avoiding an electoral catastrophe—an argument that no party leader could put to his rank and file.

It is also true that the Cabinet, as Hobhouse saw it, was no instrument for waging war, Fisher and the shells "scandal" in the first war, were, like the Norwegian campaign in the second, the occasions not the causes of change.

by incapacitated patients, then ate it themselves, and saw no point in removing lice from men who were dying anyway.

But many soldiers recalled their mothers as they felt at last "the touch of a woman's hand." An instinctive sense of hygiene, which led Nurse Sarah Anne to burn each swab after bathing a wound, must have saved many lives, as did her generous sharing of her own scanty food for the worst sufferers from the doctors' neglect. Her only indignation is at the dismissal of a valued colleague Sister Elizabeth, one of whose letters home got into the Times. She was asked of exaggerating conditions. But the controversies of the war are not really Nurse Sarah Anne's meat; they are discussed in an excellently balanced section of the book, in which the editor sets the scene.

Florence Nightingale inspired in Sarah Anne "an impulse to love and trust her," but she remains a shadowy figure here. Not so the patients, whom she found more noble, patient and generous than human nature generally is, "ready to share and never jealous when she fed only the weakest. Her character studies are full of humour. She describes three men comparing their shattered legs each day, and one decking his with roses. "Laughing," she says, "as conducive to health as signing is the reverse."

No bitterness dominates her modest, compassionate account. A young Cockney boy, "who did not seem very ill at first" died from undiluted medicine. Incompetent doctors left weakened patients all day without food. "Rice was served full of sand and stones. The orderlies 'wild, rough boys,' left food

by the bedside, and the patients were left to starve. One man, who had been in the hospital for weeks, was found dead in his bed. The orderlies 'wild, rough boys,' left food

## 'BONEY' FULLER

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## MAUD GONNE

A Biography of Yeats' Beloved

by SAMUEL LEVENSON

A notorious Victorian English beauty who broke every convention of her time, and a passionate advocate of Irish freedom, Maud was immortalized by W. B. Yeats but never reciprocated his devotion. £6.95

CASSELL



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Cassandra Jardine and baby Oliver: 'The minute I stopped breast-feeding, friends said, my ribs would reappear overnight like the shelves in a defrosting freezer'

# Beating the baby bulge

After the birth of her son, Cassandra Jardine discovered that she, too, was rounded and bouncy. She also discovered there was no miracle cure

EVEN months and two weeks after my child was born I took drastic action. It was not before time. In the months since he made his first angry cry he had put on 12 lb weight and was looking rounded, bouncy and jolly. Fortunately, in that same period I had put on the same amount of weight, with the result that I, too, was rounded, bouncy and felt rather less lively.

It was not as if I had not put on more than enough weight during pregnancy to allow me to survive for several weeks in the wild without the help of a fridge or larder. Nor had anyone ever called me underweight before I started out.

While not counting every calorie, I had eaten what I considered sensibly — three meals, snacks, and Vitapint instead of a glass of milk in the middle of the night when I didn't sleep. To what, then, did I ascribe my ever-growing waistline?

People had been too kind to me, I decided. There were plenty of them to blame.

The catalogue started with my mother who, generous with food when I was a baby myself, had allowed me to set up a rack of fat cells just waiting to be plumped out. Along with her I condemned the NHS GP who had watched my weight go up without comment, and the pre-natal teacher who promoted the attractions of breast-feeding by telling tales of the buns her lactating mother wolfed down with impunity when she went to post-natal class.

As my ego suffered further post-birth blows, I turned on my

friends. There were some villains who had assured me they had lost all the weight they put on during pregnancy, without ever giving the matter a thought, just by breast-feeding. And other good souls, who had smiled indulgently as I fought my way into Laura Ashley size 16s, and said that the flab was nothing more than water retention — the minute I stopped breast-feeding, they said, my ribs would reappear overnight like the shelves in a defrosting freezer.

The baby himself was another key culprit. He had quite clearly put all my hormones into a whirl and caused my metabolism to grind to a halt. Finally I decided I could blame indoctrination by the salad lobby which had left me with the irrational belief that all cold food is diet food — even salmon mayonnaise.

Mind-stretching as it was, shifting the blame on to others was not doing much to shift the flab and by August action was needed. I started by booking myself into a health farm.

All health farms seem to be much the same, differing only in the comfort of the rooms, the quality of the minute portions of food laced with low-fat yoghurt dressings, and the quantity of distractions on offer. I chose Inglewood, near Hungerford, not only for its high score on all these points, but because just over the hill are to be found the trainee nannies of Norland, who take

babies as temporary boarders to practise upon at £36 a night.

In theory I would stay at Inglewood, starve and be pumelled, while Oliver would enjoy life at Norland's, being dressed in real nappies by uniformed nurses and wheeled around in an old-fashioned pram. We would meet twice a day to discuss our progress. Sadly, Norland was full, but Inglewood could take me.

Just as others always tidy up before the cleaner comes, the prospect of having to stand on the scales and be counted was enough to encourage good behaviour for two weeks before. I also discovered, thanks to my search for the right health farm, that if you take a subject seriously then you will find plenty of others who will do so too.

In those two weeks I talked to consultants, to midwives, to nurses and to alternative medicine practitioners. In solemn tones I outlined the nature of my problem. In equally solemn tones they played it back to me with talk of hormonal imbalances, stress, water retention, even of auras and trauma.

I found a homeopath who prescribed an invisible essence of sulphur to cure my ills, having asked all manner of ques-

tions, from my husband's opinion of me to whether my feet were sweaty. Whatever it was, it made me high for the rest of the day, though that could have been because I missed lunch.

On another foray I hit upon the herbalists of Middle Piccadilly, a specialist centre in Dorset, who prescribed a medicine that tasted like honey, called Chinese Elixir, to regulate my hormones and metabolism.

Their spokesman, Clare Harvey, suggested I take it in combination with essence of pearl, a pomegranate, water melon and squash, a mixture that would, "tone up the reproductive organs and reduce the weight around the waist, hips and thighs, drain the lymphatic system, improve circulation and help to maintain stamina throughout the day through aiding the assimilation of vitamins and the absorption of iron".

Even at Inglewood I found someone who was prepared to explore the mystery of my weight without smirking. Tini, the brisk matron from Holland who described herself as a "practical person", was eager to reassure me that my rounded figure was not my fault. She herself, despite relentless exercise and fasting,

had remained a stone heavier for a whole year after the birth of her son.

Everyone was prepared to discuss at length the issue of the changed body image of the new mother, the difficulty of eating sensibly when grabbing snacks between feeds, and the change in pace that occurs to many women when they have less time to run around and more hours chained to the sofa. But their prescriptions for the solution to the gained weight that lie at the end of all these good excuses, had a monotonous predictability.

Alongside his sugar packed the homeopath suggested that I give up all fats, alcohol, tea, coffee and, bizarrely, peppermint. Clare Harvey of Middle Piccadilly, after detailing the properties of the tinctures in bottles, suggested they would be most effective combined with a light diet and exercise.

The clincher was put on my case when even the sympathetic Tini, after a minute study of the timetable of my weight gain and my patterns of eating, pronounced her verdict. "I do not think there is anything medically wrong with you," she declared in the tone of a hanging judge. "And what you must do is eat less and exercise more."

I am doing so and, slowly and painfully — sadly, not miraculously — the scales are registering an impact. I'm now back to my post-birth best with according to Inglewood another two stone to go. As I weigh the raw courgettes, keep trying to remind myself that I knew all along that pregnancy was not a licence to eat, but it was fun, for a time being licentious.

*'The solution had a monotonous predictability'*

Shiela Kitzinger, midwife and mother of five

I have observed that while the hormones are dominant in a woman's body she is rounded and soft. This is not a bad thing. We've got our priorities wrong in thinking women should spring back into shape. The whole Jane Fonda image is very damaging. You feel you are letting yourself down.

Once you have stopped breast-feeding there is no reason why the body should not be almost as before — though the ribs may have splayed out a little to accommodate the baby. Looking back at myself when the twins were small I was in pretty good shape. We didn't have the same number of domestic machines, so I was using all my muscles.

Dr Geraldine McNeill, Rowett Research Institute, Aberdeen, seven months pregnant and at the bottom of the weight-gain scale.

In developing countries mothers eat only

## BRACING WORDS FROM THE EXPERTS

1,400-1,500 calories a day, yet they remain healthy and produce babies which are only 10 per cent smaller than in developed countries, so we have to assume that the metabolic rate slows down during pregnancy. Research is showing that during the first 25 to 30 weeks the metabolic rate drops 10-15 per cent, so that instead of eating for two you actually need less food than normal.

In the last trimester the metabolic rate increases to compensate for the extra weight that has to be carried around, so you need to eat more, but only slightly. After birth it slows again during lactation. We have also found that the idea that exercise increases your metabolic rate, or stops it falling, is true only in very extreme cases.

All this adds up to the idea that even

the current concepts on what is a reasonable weight gain may be too generous.

Mr Michael Brudenell, consultant gynaecologist

The idea of setting limits for the amount of weight women should gain during pregnancy has largely gone by the board. People used to think that if women did not gain too much they would be less likely to suffer from high blood pressure and toxemia. Now it is thought that the weight gain is not a cause but a result of high blood pressure.

I do not tell patients how much they are allowed to put on, I just advise sensible eating and warn them that they will have to lose it later. I do have a pregnant friend who goes to a very fierce obstetrician who happens to work round the corner from a bakery. She starves herself for days just before each visit and the minute she has seen him goes round the corner and buys a bag of buns. That seems silly.

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